

## 2. SIGHTING OF ALBINO CHANGEABLE HAWK-EAGLE *NISAETUS LIMNAEETUS* IN SITAMATA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY IN SOUTH RAJASTHAN

MANOJ PARASHAR<sup>1</sup> AND SATISH KUMAR SHARMA<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Deputy Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Chittorgarh 312 001, Rajasthan, India. Email: manojparashar2002@yahoo.com

<sup>2</sup>Range Forest Officer, Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Udaipur 313 001, Rajasthan, India. Email: sksharma56@gmail.com

The southern part of Rajasthan has a forest cover of deciduous species that looks dry during summer. But riparian strips along banks of streams in valleys remain green even during summer, a clear contrast to the landscape. Dotted dry bamboo brakes are seen in this part, especially where soil depth is more than 0.30 m. The high density of forest cover of southern Rajasthan supports many species of raptors. The Changeable Hawk-Eagle *Nisaetus limnaeetus* is regularly seen in wooded areas of Udaipur, Rajsamand, Banswara, Sirohi, Pratapgarh, Dungarpur and Chittorgarh districts. Bhardwaj (2008) has sighted this species in Sitamata Sanctuary in Chittorgarh-Udaipur districts. Sharma (2007) and Tehsin (1982) have recorded this species in Phulwari and Gogunda areas of Udaipur district respectively.

During our surveys we found this species in Kumbhalgarh Sanctuary (Udaipur, Rajsamand and Pali districts), Pipal Khunt forest area of Banswara district, Vanjoi-ki-Nal and Bhichhiwara forest areas of Dungarpur district. It is also present in Dhariyawad forests of Pratapgarh district (pers. obs.). This hawk-eagle is also seen in Ramgarh Vishdhari Wildlife Sanctuary of Bundi district in the Hadoti zone of the state (P.S. Chundawat, Asst. Conservator of forests and Warden of Ramgarh Vishdhari Sanctuary, pers. comm. 2009). We regularly observed this species in Ramkunda, Tinsara, Kheela, Samoli, Khokhariya-ki-Nal, Torna and Nal Mokhi forests of Udaipur district. It is also present in the thick forest cover of Morus area of Sirohi district. This species is widely present in denser forest zone of the state.

On August 29, 2008, while roaming in the Teak *Tectona grandis* forest of Ambareti forest block of Aarampura naka, Dhariyawad Range in Sitamata Wildlife Sanctuary, at about 1100 hrs, we observed an albino Changeable Hawk-Eagle *Nisaetus limnaeetus* perched on a bough of a tall *Lannea coromandelica* tree (Fig. 1). The adult eagle was milky white in colour. Tip and base of its upper mandible was pinkish-white, but the culmen was light grayish. The lower mandible and eye-rims were pinkish-white and feet maize yellow. The talons were pale and eyes were dark red. Its crest was clearly visible from a distance.

During monsoon, i.e., July to September, the Sitamata Sanctuary is covered with dense foliage, and the tree crowns

become dark. The albino hawk-eagle was distinctly visible against the dark green foliage of the forest. This situation is probably not good for a raptor as it is easily visible to its prey.

At the time of observation, the bird was looking quite healthy. It appears that, at present, the Hawk-eagle is not facing difficulty in getting sufficient food.

Albinism has been recorded in many bird species, e.g., Crows (Mahabal 1991; Abdulla 1997), Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus* (Soni 1992), Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (Bharos 1996), Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* (Soni 1992; Joshua 1996), Lesser Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna javanica* (Chatterjee 1995), Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* (Jha 1994) and Large Grey Babbler



Fig. 1: Albino Changeable Hawk-Eagle *Nisaetus limnaeetus* in Sitamata Wildlife Sanctuary Rajasthan

*Turdoides malcolmi* (Sharma 2003). An albino Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus* was seen in 2005 by I.P.S. Matharu, Dy. Conservator of Forests, Bassi Wildlife Sanctuary, Chittorgarh district, Rajasthan (pers. comm. 2003). Presence of albinism in Changeable Hawk-Eagle is a new addition to birds, hence worth placing on records.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to the field staff of Sitamata Wildlife Sanctuary for providing help during study. Thanks are also due to Shri I.P.S. Matharu and P.S. Chundawat for providing information about avian fauna of Bassi and Ramgarh Vishdhari Sanctuaries respectively.

## REFERENCES

- ABDULLA, E.V. (1997): White Jungle Crow. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 37(5): 91.
- BHARDWAJ, G.S. (2008): Short notes on first reporting of Birds in Sitamata Sanctuary. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 48(1): 10.
- BHAROS, A.M.K. (1996): Albino Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 93(2): 293.
- CHATTERJEE, S. (1995): Occurrence of albino Lesser Whistling Teal *Dendrocygna javanica* (Hasfield). *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 92(2): 417-418.
- JHA, S. (1994): An albino Myna *Acridotheris tristis* (Linnaeus). *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 91(3): 455.
- JOSHUA, J. (1996): An albino red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 93(1): 506.
- MAHABAL, A. (1991): Cases of albinism in house and jungle crows. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 31(9&10): 14.
- SHARMA, S.K. (2003): Total albinism in a Large Grey Babbler *Turdoides malcolmi*. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 100(1): 144-145.
- SHARMA, S.K. (2007): Study of biodiversity and Ethnobiology of Phulwari Wildlife Sanctuary, Udaipur (Rajasthan). Ph.D. Thesis. MLU University, Udaipur.
- SONI, R.G. (1992): Albinism in birds. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 32(3&4): 13.
- TEHSIN, R.H. (1982): Collective defensive strategy in Blue Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*). *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 79(2): 914.

### 3. PRECISE LOCALITY RECORDS OF *ERYX WHITAKERI* DAS, 1991 WITH NOTES ON SCALATION AND A COMMENT ON ITS COMMON NAME

ASHOK CAPTAIN<sup>1</sup>, SANJAY THAKUR<sup>2</sup> AND ANIL KHAIRE<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>3/1 Boat Club Road, Pune 411 001, Maharashtra, India. Email: ashokcaptain@hotmail.com

<sup>2</sup>666/1 Bhoi Ali, Raviwar Peth, Talegaon Dabhade, Pune 410 506, Maharashtra, India. Email: sanjaythakur12@rediffmail.com

<sup>3</sup>Bahinabai Choudhary Pranisangrahalay, Chinchwad, Pune 411 019, Maharashtra, India. Email: pcmczoo2004@yahoo.com

Das (1991) described a new erycine snake – *Eryx whitakeri* based on a holotype collected from Mangalore (Karnataka State, India) in 1990. In 1991, this species was known to occur along the south-western coast of India – in Kerala (Cannanore); Karnataka (Mangalore and Dakshin, Kannada district); Goa (Panjim beach) and southern Maharashtra fide Das (1991). Earlier, Khaire and Khaire (1986) had reported a hybrid – *Eryx conicus* x *Eryx johnii* from Maharashtra (Alibaug, Raigad district), which, based on scalation and photographs, was identified by Das (1991) as *Eryx whitakeri*. Thakur (1998) extended the range of this species to include the Sahyadri Range of the Western Ghats (Maharashtra) without mentioning any precise localities. Whitaker and Captain (2004) also recorded it from, “sea level to at least 625 m (2050 ft) along the Western Ghats in Karnataka, Kerala, Goa and Maharashtra”, again without naming precise localities. We herein cite eight authenticated records of *Eryx whitakeri* from Maharashtra (Table 1) based on individuals that were examined by at least one of the authors, as well as notes on scalation of the species.

Although previously reported from Maharashtra, more fieldwork needs to be done to determine if indeed this species

is found throughout Maharashtra, or it is limited to higher rainfall areas.

In referring to this species, we follow Whitaker and Captain (2004) who stated that although this species would probably be assigned to *Gongylophis* (as its morphological

**Table 1:** Precise locality records for *Eryx whitakeri* from Maharashtra, India (based on direct observations by the authors)

Locality	District	Coordinates	Annual rainfall* (mm)
Nasapur	Pune	N 18°15", E 75°53"	700-1,000
Mulshi	Pune	N 18°31", E 73°31"	6,500
Lohagad fort	Pune	N 18°46", E 73°22"	2,000-3,000
Ambavne	Pune	N 18°12", E 73°45"	5,000-6,000
Lonavla	Pune	N 18°45", E 73°22"	4,000-5,000
Khandala	Pune	N 18°53" E 73° 21"	4,000-5,500
Kankavli	Sindhudurg	N 16°15'34.3, E 73°43'09.83	4,000-5,000
Amba Valley	Raigad	N 18°45.402, E 73°21.204	4,000-5,500

\*Ref. Climate of Maharashtra state (1972) Govt. of India, Indian Meteorological Department (based on 50 years of data)